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SPORTS, C-3

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Trump defends tax plan

President proclaims economy set 'to rock'

By Jonathan Lemire and Stephen Ohlemacher
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Closing in on the first major legislative achievement of his term, President Donald Trump on Saturday defended the Republican tax cut as a good deal for the middle class while boldly suggesting it could lead to explosive economic growth.

The legislation, which the GOP aims to muscle through Congress this week, would lower taxes on the richest Americans. Benefits for most other taxpayers would be smaller, but Mr. Trump attempted to sell the bill as a "Christmas present" for middle-class Americans in part because it would trigger job growth.

"It'll be fantastic for the middle-income people and for jobs, most of all," Mr. Trump told reporters on the White House lawn before traveling to Camp David for the weekend. "And I will say that because of what we've done with regulation and other things our economy is

SEE **TAX**, PAGE A-6

Uncounted: Why workers are giving up

By Daniel Moore
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

It should be open season for job-hunting workers in the Pittsburgh region.

The unemployment rate, at 4.7 percent, is the lowest in nine years. Education, health care, technology and financial services sectors report steady hiring. Business leaders say the city has a shot at winning Amazon's second headquarters and the promise of 50,000 jobs and a $5 billion investment. In September, the Brookings Institution described Pittsburgh's economy as the "future."

Still, the pool of people who say they are looking for a job is on the decline.

"The job-seekers are a little bit more depressed here, or less hopeful," said Vera Krekanova Krofcheck, chief strategy officer for Partner4Work, a publicly funded workforce development agency that connects job-seekers with employers. "All the great things happening in the economy cannot be denied, but people do not feel like they're a part of it."

Especially mystifying is the data that show among those giving up are people of prime working age:

SEE **WORKERS**, PAGE A-8

IN REMEMBRANCE

Rebecca Droke/Post-Gazette

Lance Cpl. John Ackerman of the Young Marines pauses at the headstone of a veteran during Wreaths Across America Day on Saturday at the National Cemetery of the Alleghenies in Cecil. A contribution from the Steelers helped Wreaths Across America place wreaths on all 10,100 headstones at the cemetery. More than 3,000 volunteers participated. John, who plans to join the military when he is older, wanted to pay his respects to those who had served the country. "I don't want to be in a grave and not have visitors. It's the worst thing to happen, to serve our country and no one shows thanks." **Story on B-3.**

Highmark extends its vision for care to Central Pa.

By Steve Twedt
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

By partnering with Penn State Health, Highmark Health sees an opportunity to project its vision of community-based, close-to-home medical care to a whole new region of the state.

With Highmark Health's backing, meanwhile, Penn State Health will be able to expand its reach throughout Central Pennsylvania with a number of new primary, specialty and acute care facilities — and avoid getting squeezed by larger health systems moving into their territory from the west and east.

"It's a very natural partnership," said Steve Foreman, associate professor of health care administration at Robert Morris University. "It makes a whole lot of sense for both sides."

More details about the agreement, announced Friday, will be revealed Monday when leaders of both organizations make themselves available for questions.

But it's already apparent that Highmark Health is committed to building on its vision of future health care, unveiled barely two months ago, when it announced plans to place four small-scale "neighborhood" hospitals locally, with the goal of giving people easy

SEE **HIGHMARK**, PAGE A-8

Morris Berman/Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Terry Bradshaw in the 1970s. The Steelers-Patriots rivalry began in his hometown, Shreveport, La.

Blowout planted seeds of Steelers-Patriots rivalry

By Stephen J. Nesbitt
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Given the way the 21st century has unfolded, it may be hard to fathom that the series between the Steelers and the New England Patriots stands all square at 15 wins a side. These AFC titans, tethered by the 1970 AFL-NFL merger, alternated altogether one-sided eras. Pittsburgh won 12 of 16 meetings before momentum swung to the Patriots, who have taken 11 of the past 14.

The past provides a backdrop for Sunday's proceedings at Heinz Field. The winner will secure inside position for a first-round bye and home-field advantage throughout the AFC playoffs. The 10-3 Patriots, the defending Super Bowl champions, had their eight-

SEE **RIVALRY**, PAGE A-4

Bishop travels to China to return gift from Mao Zedong

By Peter Smith
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Bishop Dorsey McConnell, who leads the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh, recalls that when he was growing up decades ago, he used to gaze at a handmade Mongolian saddle blanket that was draped on a rocker in the family den.

The blanket featured a pattern of an antlered reindeer, craning its neck to reach a leaf on a tree.

"I would study that reindeer," wondering if it would "ever reach that leaf," Bishop McConnell said.

Only over time did he come to understand the historic significance of the blanket.

The bishop's father, John Paul McConnell, was an Army Air Forces brigadier general during

SEE **BLANKET**, PAGE A-4

Weather
Today's high 42, tonight's low 34.
Page A-20

Automotive F-7
Books D-5
Bridge D-6
Business B-1
Crosswords D-6
Editorials D-2
Forum D-1
Home & Garden G-1
Horoscope F-5
Jobs F-1
Lottery A-7
Movies E-3
The Next Page D-7
Obituaries B-4
Brian O'Neill A-2
The Region B-3
Sports C-1
Sunday Magazine .. E-1
Television E-4
Travel E-6

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